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ABSTRACT

Using a sequential approach, this booklet identifies a number of research skills students need to become independent in gathering and presenting information. The booklet begins with a brief description of the sequential development of research skills it recommends, a bar graph representation of the skills used as a curriculum planner, and a preface that offers an overview of skills to be taught at the elementary, middle school/junior high, and high school levels. It next presents descriptions of 16 elementary school level research paper activities designed to promote skill in collecting and recording information, notetaking, using reference sources, and organizing notes for writing. The booklet then offers suggestions for helping older students write papers; sets forth minimum requirements for papers at 9th, 10th, and 11th and 12th grade levels; offers exercises on how to use "Reader's Guide" and the card catalog, begin the paper, prepare a bibliography, and evaluate the paper. The last section of the booklet discusses the writing skills Wisconsin colleges look for in entering students and presents two statements on writing prepared by the University of Wisconsin at Madison. The booklet contains a 24-item bibliography. (FL)

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# a GUIDE TO Research Writing

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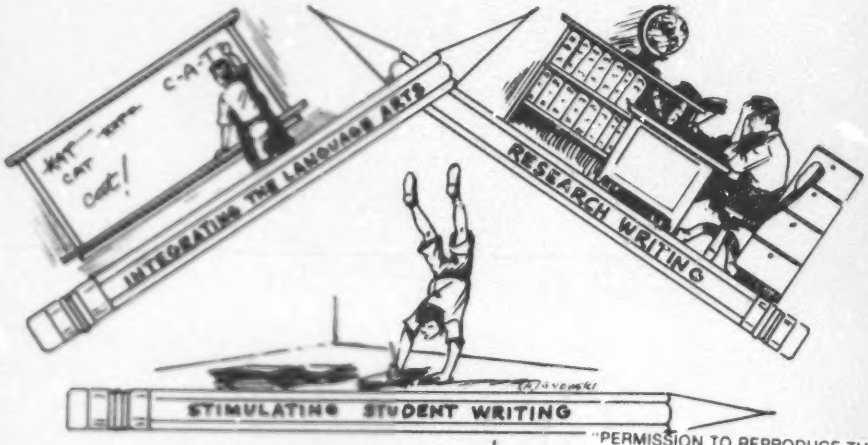

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# Wisconsin Writing Project

1982



CS208607

# A GUIDE TO TEACHING

# RESEARCH AND REPORT WRITING

James Hein
Elsa Lawrence
Alice Lawerenz
Elizabeth Rohde
Shelly Stillman
David Watry

Edited By

Linda Christensen
Nancy S. Haugen
John M. Kean

WISCONSIN WRITING PROJECT 1982

University of Wisconsin-Madison
School of Education

## WISCONSIN WRITING PROJECT 1982

**PROJECT DIRECTOR:** John M. Kean, Professor
Department of Curriculum and Instruction
University of Wisconsin-Madison

**PROJECT COORDINATORS:** Linda Christensen, Nancy S. Haugen
Department of Curriculum and Instruction
University of Wisconsin-Madison

**PROJECT SUPPORT STAFF:** Donna L. Fisker

### ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Nathan S. Blount, Professor
Chairperson, W.W.P.
UW-Madison

Bonnie Faust
Oregon School Dist.

Steven Fortney
Stoughton Public Schools

Phillip Helgesen, Dist. Adm.
Oregon Public Schools

Margaret Jensen
Madison Metro. School Dist.

Robert Kellner
Wisconsin Dept. Public Instr.

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UW-Madison

D. D. Mortimer, Dist. Adm.
Columbus Public Schools

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UW-Madison

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Carrol Theobald
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### EX OFFICIO

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UW-Madison

Peter J. Burke, Exec. Sec.
Wisconsin Improvement Program
UW-Madison

Blair Matthews, Asst. to
Vice Chancellor
UW-Madison

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This section provides a step-by-step process for developing a research paper, including choosing a subject, taking notes, making an outline, writing the paper, preparing the references, and typing the final draft. Also included are suggested activities and evaluation forms.

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# Introduction

A. What is this guide about?

This guide identifies certain research skills students need to become independent in gathering and presenting information.

B. How is the guide used?

This guide presents a suggested continuum for school staffs. It contains a sequential development of research skills with examples of activities and resources. However, these activities and resources are not exhaustive. Ideas from this guide may be used by school staff to plan curricula which outlines:

1. the skills to be taught.
2. the level at which skills should be stressed, and
3. the staff member or members to teach each skill.

C. How is the guide organized?

This guide begins with a sequential development of research skills. For ease of selection, the content has been divided into two sections, K-6, and 7-12. However, teachers at any level may find useful activities to adapt to any grade.

"Those who learn to retrieve and store information without developing the capacity to discriminate and choose that information may well become slaves to second-hand, ready-made opinions."

Dr. Kay E. Vandergrift, Columbia University

"Research begins with the first question."

# Sequential Development of Research Skills

The Sequential Development of Research Skills bar graph is a curriculum planner which may be useful in your school. It is organized into five sections--orientation, audiovisual resources, card catalog, classification and arrangement, research and reference resources, and research writing skills. Each section is further divided into skill categories that are overlapping and not all-inclusive. The bars suggest where these skills may be taught in the K-12 system.

## Sequential Development of Research Skills Overview

| I. Orientation | K | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| A. Introduction to personnel | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * |
| B. Library courtesy | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * |
| C. Kinds and locations of materials | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * |
| D. Care of books and audiovisual materials | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * |
| E. Identification and care of audiovisual equipment | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * |
| F. Circulation procedures | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * |

| II. Audiovisual Resources | K | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| A. Indentification of AV resources | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * |
| B. Care and operation of AV equipment | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * |
| C. Utilization of AV resources | | | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * |
| D. Production of AV | | | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * |

| III. Card Catalog, Classification, and Arrangement | K | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| A. Alphabetizing | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * |
| B. Arrangement of materials | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * |
| C. Shelf labels | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * |
| D. Catalog drawer labels and guide cards | | | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * |
| E. Relation of call number to materials | | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * |
| F. Types of catalog cards | | | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * |
| G. Classification system | | | | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * |
| H. Cross reference | | | | | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * |

| IV. Research and Reference Resources | K | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| A. Dictionaries | | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * |
| B. Encyclopedias | | | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * |
| C. Periodicals | | | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * |
| D. Periodical Indexes | | | | | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * |
| E. Other Reference Sources | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 1. Vertical files | | | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * |
| 2. Interviewing community resources | | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * |
| 3. Indexes, almanacs, yearbooks, atlases | | | | | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * |
| 4. Special biographical references | | | | | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * |
| 5. Subject area references | | | | | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * |

| V. Research Writing Skills | K | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| A. Selecting the topic | | | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * |
| B. Locating and collecting information from various sources | | | | | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * |
| C. Taking notes | | | | | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * |
| D. Outlining | | | | | | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * |
| E. Writing the paper | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 1. Introduction | | | | | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * |
| 2. Transitions | | | | | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * |
| 3. Conclusions | | | | | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * |
| F. Footnotes | | | | | | | * | * | * | * | * | * | * |
| G. Bibliography | | | | | | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * |
| H. Completing the paper | | | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * |
| I. Style sheet | | | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * |
| J. Sample research paper | | | | | | | | * | * | * | * | * | * |

# Preface

K-6

Research skills introduced at an early level are building blocks that can be strengthened during subsequent years. Students' progress according to individual abilities with the range of mastery skills becoming progressively wider. In the intermediate grades, student needs should be assessed to avoid unnecessary repetition. Those with high levels of mastery can serve as tutors in peer teaching situations.

Soon after enrollment, students should be formally introduced to the Instructional Material Center, the library staff and procedures expected. Each IMC has characteristics and services to offer students.

Middle School/Junior High School

Although basic library use and beginning research skills have been introduced in grades K-6, it should not be assumed that these skills have been learned. This section emphasizes reinforcement of skills. IMC directors and teachers should diagnose students' needs before teaching a particular skill and instruction should be adapted to the needs. This could mean employing aspects of the preceding elementary school curriculum or advancing to the high school level.

9-12 High School

As students reach high school, they should be refining the skills

already learned. At this level they should also be independently applying their knowledge of IMC use and study skills to <u>all</u> their assignments in each subject area. Reinforcement will still be necessary, and IMC directors and teachers together still need to utilize elements of the elementary and intermediate school curricula to assure that all students have learned basic study skills related to library use.

# Section I: Elementary Level Research Paper Activities

This section provides sixteen activities focusing on the production of a research paper.

Report Writing Skills

Too often when asked to write a report, children locate an appropriate encyclopedia volume, sit down with pencil and paper, and write "reports". Even when children use their own words in these assignments, they are not learning how to do a report. To teach report writing, a teacher must not only assign a topic but also help students develop and apply the four basic skills of good report writing: collecting and recording information, note-taking, using reference sources, and organizing notes for writing.

COLLECTING AND RECORDING--Children should be made aware that information may be gathered from many sources other than books. They should also be introduced to a variety of ways of recording data and information. The following activities can be used to introduce these skills to students.

Children can survey each other to learn their favorite singers, television programs, or foods; find out how everyone gets to school; what car they'd choose if they could buy one; or where to get the best fast food. Other possibilities include having students record their observations as they experiment with something: Which objects float and which do not? What are the events in the growth cycle of newborn mice or the germination periods of different seeds? They can measure objects using nonstandard

measures and compare their results with standard English measures.

Children may wish to record information by graphing data before writing about it. This approach to informational writing by recording firsthand information is an important step in getting children accustomed to doing reports in their own words. Although the content of such recording will vary from primary to middle-grade students because of their differing interests, the process is the same. It is a critical first step in report writing.

NOTETAKING--Learning to take notes is the second important skill involved in report writing. To encourage children to take notes in their own words from reference sources, start with paragraphs of information on large poster boards, chart boards, or transparencies. This way you can control how long they can see the paragraph. Give children time to read it and then turn it over or turn the projector off. Ask the children to write in their own words one sentence that tells what the paragraph was about. You may give them a second look at the paragraph to get a name or detail they missed. Next have them share their sentences with you. Comment on them: Which ones are too imitative of the words of the original writer? Which are good and for what reason? This takes time and patience because taking notes involves abstracting and summarizing information--both complex cognitive tasks. It is a difficult skill to master.

It may take a number of experiences before children can take notes easily. They may need group practice with paragraphs two or three times a week for several weeks. To promote individual responsibility, use worksheets with paragraphs typed only on the left-hand half of the paper. Have students fold the sheets in half lengthwise so the paragraphs are on

the left side and a blank space is on the right. The object of this exercise is to have students read the first paragraph, turn the paper over, and write their notes. (By now this may be two or perhaps even three sentences if the paragraph is long or has a great deal of information.)

After students have mastered the paragraph summaries, they should be ready to use books. Some may find they want to mark their place and close the book when writing notes; others may be able to write in their own words without doing that.

USING REFERENCE SOURCES—Now children are ready to concentrate on the third basic skill—using several sources for information. School librarians are often willing to pull some books on particular topics if given advance notice. If possible, bring a book cart to your room; otherwise, arrange for children to use the books in the library. The instructional goal is to expose students to the tremendous variety of informational books available. Often these books are easier to read than encyclopedias and have more illustrations to clarify the concepts. (Of course, students will need to learn how to find their own informational books independently, but the purpose here is to develop the ability to integrate several sources of information on a topic. Learning to locate informational books should take place later.)

ORGANIZING NOTES FOR WRITING—Students should now be ready to master the fourth skill—organizing notes for writing. Having children take notes on separate pieces of paper reminds them not to copy. Children go through their papers at the end of the week and cut off the bottom pieces that are blank. A monitor later cuts the pieces into blank note cards about 4 1/2" X 3" and puts them in a box for those who need them. Students

should be instructed to write only one idea on each note card.

After reading and taking notes, students should put a one or two-word label on each card. Next, the note cards with the same label are clipped together and spread out on a large table or on the floor. The students arrange them in the order they will use them when writing. The labels on the note cards, when arranged in order, become the report outline. Now children can work at their own desks or writing tables. Thus, the outline serves as a useful tool for organizing ideas, not a chore done to please the teacher after the report is written. Remind children that if they have a few notes that don't seem to fit into the rest of their plan, they may be discarded. Not every note taken needs to be used in the report!

The four basic skills of report writing are not easily acquired. But the procedures outlined here have been used by teachers who have had good results in the form of good reports.

K-6 Research Activities

Students will:

1. Use the telephone directory to alphabetize.
2. Line up as you call their last name.
3. Check the card catalog to understand special problems in alphabetizing. (for instance: abbreviations, Mc and Mac)
4. Locate fiction and non-fiction books. How are these shelved?
5. Note listings of frequently used Dewey numbers:

| Examples: | Fairy tales | 398.2 |
|---|---|---|
| | Dinosaurs | 568 |
| | Sports | 796 |

6. Compare supermarket arrangements to that of a library.

7. Be able to:

-find a fiction book about a country.

-find a non-fiction book about that country.

-locate a map, globe, or atlas of that country.

-locate a poem about that country.

-locate a fairy tale taking place in that country.

-list other materials available from that country.

Intermediate Research Activities

Activity to increase student knowledge of the Dewey Decimal classification system.

Procedure: Divide the class into ten groups, one to represent each of the main classes of the Dewey Classification.

Begin "Classification Clubs". Each club is responsible for publicizing books in their classification to the other students. To do this, the students must be familiar with the various subjects included in their categories. Each club determines the interesting topics within their classification--Why it is important to know this information, what does the information add to our lives, etc. Promoting these classifications can be done with oral reports, posters, ads, or bulletin boards.

Note: You might assign one classification club to be responsible for each of the nine school months--eliminating the 000's that include reference works of a general type.

Role Playing Activity

Exercises in role-playing can be used to help students understand good conduct and courtesy in the IMC. After role-playing, the class discusses topics such as acceptable vs. unacceptable behavior and special problems of the IMC director.

Making Catalog Cards

Students can make the three different types of catalog cards (subject, author, and title) for books which have been read to the class or student written

books. (This activity is especially appropriate for a class or school that "publishes" student writing because students can make the three catalog cards for their own books.)

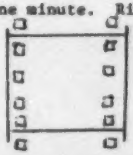
Using Film strip/Cassette Media for Reporting Research

Just as students often get their information from filmstrips and cassettes, students can use these media to share their research. Filmstrips and cassettes can provide an exciting vehicle for reporting. Extensive pre-writing activities, such as discussions and demonstrations on sequencing, organization, and oral/graphic expression must take place. This activity can also enhance students' awareness of commercial filmstrips and cassettes.

You can send for film strip kits at the following addresses:

Make Your Own Filmstrips without a Camera
Media Kit for Teacher and Students
1977 Lake Tahoe Book Co.

Scholastic Film Strip Kit
Scholastic Publishing Co.

or you can bleach the emulsion from old film strips with one quart of water and one cup of chlorine bleach. Unroll, totally submerge, and gently agitate the film for about one minute. Rinse and hang to dry. Each frame has four pairs of slots.  Score the frames between every fourth slot. Draw on the filmstrip with permanent magic marker or wax pencils. Draw the outlines on one side of the film and color on the back for effective results.

Students should have copies of the following pre-writing hand out to plan their graphic and written work.

Subject or Title _____ Name _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

A variation of strip film-making is slide-making. This can be done easily and can be adapted to different levels.

1. Slides: primary grades

   Materials--paper ruled with rectangles
   34 mm wide by 23mm high and
   pencil.

   Children draw pictures that accompany story or report. Run pictures through thermofax onto transparencies. Cut and put into slide frames. Color with permanent markers. Number slides. Write narration with sentences numbered to correspond with slides.

2. Slides: intermediate grades

   Run transparencies ruled with rectangles 4cm X 3cm with 34mm X 23mm rectangles within. Students draw directly on plastic transparencies with permanent markers (Remove with alcohol.) Cut and mount in slide holders.

Beginning Research Writing: An Example

Use Volume E of the World Book Encyclopedia and read the article on ELEPHANTS. (You can reproduce this section to give each student a copy.) Have students make a list of questions relating to elephants.

On 3X5 cards students write in their own words the information about elephants they think is most important. These will be answers to questions they made up after reading the article. Students should use a code word or phrase on the top of each card, such as "elephant-body" or "elephant-food," before writing the information in their own words. They should check to see if they have answered all the questions they wanted to answer. (More advanced students can use multiple resources.)

Students can compare their questions and facts before writing individual reports from the note cards, arranging note cards in order which best presents information. This is called organization. When students are using several sources of information, they will need guidance in combining and omitting note cards.

Check the report for clear, complete sentences, punctuation, and spelling. Before students turn papers in they should be made aware of standards, such as how many errors are allowed if the paper is accepted.

Short Report

The encyclopedia format is an effective way to organize and present new information in a short report. Here are some exercises which may be used to teach this format.

1. Students may revise a short article from an encyclopedia on a familiar topic such as goldfish, skateboards, etc. The revision should not only include important information from the article but also other information from the students' experiences.

2. Another possibility is the simplification of an encyclopedia article. (Older children could paraphrase in simpler terms for a younger audience.)

3. Students may also contrast and compare two encyclopedia articles on the same topic. This will lead students to discover and resolve discrepencies between the two articles.

4. Students could adapt encyclopedia material for other uses such as children's non-fiction picture books, fictional diaries, puppet shows, speeches, plays, quizzes and brochures.

# Section II: The Junior/Senior High School Research Paper

In some ways, explaining how to write a research paper is simple:

1) Choose the subject.
2) Take notes.
3) Make an outline.
4) Write the paper.
5) Arrange the footnotes.
6) Organize the bibliography.

But as simple as this list is, there are obviously many, many ways to go about each of these tasks and many, many ways to teach the procedures to students. This section contains some examples of curricula and suggestions for assessing what students have learned. We have decided not to include examples of research papers or to discuss such things as formating and specific rules for research papers as these are generally available in high school and college handbooks.

## Determining Grade Level Requirements

Although there is no standard research paper requirement in the schools of Wisconsin, many school systems have by agreement among the staff across several departments identified minimum requirements for each grade level. An example of one such list is included. We emphasize that this is an example from one school system. Each school or consortium of schools should be encouraged to develop its own list.

## Required Formats for Social Studies and English Research Papers

The following are general minimum requirements at each grade level.

| | 9th grade | 10th grade | 11th & 12th grades |
|---|---|---|---|
| Length of Paper | 5-7 pages handwritten<br>3-4 pages typed | 10-15 handwritten<br>6-8 typed | 10-15 pages typed |
| Number of Sources | Three | Five | Eight |
| Types of Sources | 1 magazine, 1 book, 1 reference (no more than 1 encyclopedia may be used) | Mixed sources, no encyclopedia | Mixed sources, no encyclopedia |
| Topics | Teacher assigned or approved | Teacher assigned or approved | Teacher approved |
| Ratio of Content to Structure in Evaluation | English: 60% structure, 40% content<br>Soc. Studies: 40% structure, 60% content | Same as 9th grade | 40% structure<br>60% content |
| Interviews | None | Option available to students | At least one out-of-school interview |
| Appendix | Only if necessary for clarification | Optional-not to be included in the total page requirement | Encouraged-not to be included in the total page requirement |

Required Formats (cont.)

| | 9th grade | 10th grade | 11th & 12th grades |
|---|---|---|---|
| Footnotes, Bibliography, General Format | Dangle-Houssman (see attached) | Dangle-Houssman (see attached) | Dangle-Houssman, MLA Style Sheet and Turabian introduced |
| Typed | Typed or handwritten on unlined paper | Same as 9th grade | Must be typed |
| Time allotment in class | Approx. time from begin- to finish is 1 month, allowing 1 or 2 days per week in class or IMC | Same as 9th grade | Varies with class |
| Placement on Calendar | 2nd semester in Social Studies--spelling, grammar emphasized in 1st semester English | 2nd or 4th quarter in Intermediate composition | Varies with class |
| Possession of Papers | Teachers retain all papers | Teachers retain all papers | Papers are returned |

Examples of resources used in teaching students how to locate information.

The following materials have been found useful by teachers and librarians to assist students in learning how to look for information. Exhibit A, taken from Current Media, suggests some basic resources that students should consider. Exhibit B, from the Middleton Schools, is a work sheet used for teaching students about the contents of one information reference source, the Reader's Guide. Exhibit C is an example of a worksheet used for teaching students about the card catalogue.

Exhibit A

How to Get the Facts!
Take time and be curious.

1. Encyclopedias
   Use for general information.
2. Books
   The table of contents tells what each chapter is about.
   The index tells you what people and places are mentioned on which pages.
3. Magazines
   To find articles on your subject, use the Readers' Guide to Periodical Literature. Articles are listed under author and subject headings.
4. Newspapers
   Use Indexes, Subjects are listed alphabetically.
5. Facts on File
   This is a world news digest used for current events. Information is summarized in four catagories:
   - World Affairs
   - U.S. Affairs
   - Other Nations
   - Miscellaneous
6. Pamphlet Files
   These contain printed materials put out by information services and government agencies on subject of interest to the general public.
7. People
   Use personal interviews to find out:
   - Who
   - What
   - When
   - Why
   - Where
8. Telephone
   The telephone company has a series of recorded tapes on a variety of subjects. Call the operator for information.

(Current Media, November 1980, pp. 14-15)

Exhibit B

Reader's Guide Exercise 9-12

NAME_____

Reader's Guide used in Class Date_____Vol._____No._____

Articles indexed included dates from_____to_____

A. The Reader's Guide uses various abbreviations to save space. Fill in the complete title of the magazine for each abbreviation listed.

1. Bus W or Bans W _____
2. Nat Geog _____
3. Pop Mech _____
4. Sch Arts _____
5. Sci N _____
6. U.S. News _____

Fill in the complete word for each word abbreviated below:

7. Ag_____
8. cond_____
9. por_____
10. + _____
11. pub_____
12. tr_____

B. Reader's Guide also provides a list of the periodicals it indexes. Please refer to this list and answer yes or no if the guide contains an index to articles in the following:

1. Ebony_____
2. Jack and Jill ____
3. New York Times Magazine ____
4. Good Housekeeping _____
5. Seventeen _____
6. Today's Health _____

According to the information given on your tour of the IMC, how can you determine if our library subscribes to a certain magazine?____
_____

C. Reader's Guide entries are made by both subject and author.

Please find an entry by any author named Smith. Write out the entire entry on the lines below. NO ABBREVIATIONS!! List the page number on which you found this entry. _____
_____

Please find an entry on the subject Race (tracks, relations, cars, etc.) Write out the entire entry. NO ABBREVIATIONS!! List the page number on which you found this entry. _____
_____

How many entries were there by authors named Smith?____ How can you tell when one entry ends and the next begins?_____
_____

How many different topics were there under the subject race?_____
List them below:

_____

Middleton IMC n.d.

Exhibit C

Card Catalogue Worksheet

Name_____

The card catalogue is the basic guide to the library. It is a collection of cards listing every book the library owns. What other sources are to be found in the card catalogue?_____

As you know, there may be three cards for every source. They are:
1._____
2._____
3._____

Below is a group of cards from a typical card catalogue file. From the information given on them, answer the questions listed below the cards:

(1)
940.54
SC
Scott, Robert Lee, 1908-
Flying Tiger: Chennault, Doubleday, 1959.
285 p.

(2)
SC
MR SEA STORIES
Meader, Stephen Warren, 1892-
Whaler 'round the Horn; Illus. by Edward Shenton.
Harcourt, 1950.
224 p. illus.

(3)
921
An
Shoemaker's Son
Andersen-Burnett, Mrs. Constance, 1819-1893 -
Shoemaker's Son; the life of Hans Christian Andersen.
313 p. illus.

(4)
395
Be
Shortcut to Etiquette
Barber, Edith Michael, 1892-
Shortcut to Etiquette; with drawings by Doug Anderson.
Sterling, 1953.
125 p. illus.

For card 1 answer:
1. What does the date 1908 represent?_____
2. What is the title of the book?_____
3. What is the publishing company?_____

For card 2 answer:
1. What does the date 1950 represent?_____
2. What did Shenton contribute to the book?_____
3. What kind of card is #2?_____

For card 3 answer:
1. What kind of book is this?_____
2. Who is the author?_____
3. What does the number 313 represent?_____

For card 4 answer:
1. What is the call number of this book?_____
2. What does the date 1892 represent?_____
3. Why is there no date following 1892?_____

Using the reverse side of this sheet, make an author card for one of the books you have with you in class. Include all information that is available to you.

Middleton IMC n.d.

## Beginning the Research Paper

As in all writing, there is no single way to begin a research paper, nor is there any list of topics that are any more suitable than any other. Helen Mills in her work Commanding Essays has provided some advice that can be shared with students about beginning the research paper.

> Students should select a topic they like to write about so that they can do their research with enthusiasm and experience a feeling of discovery. If the topic must be assigned, tell students to choose some aspect of it that they like or that they understand well. The reader should be kept in mind as the student writes the research paper. Just as they want to enjoy learning from their research, their readers should be able to enjoy the information presented in their papers. A highly technical study may just confuse a reader who lacks the background needed to understand it. On the other hand, few readers want to waste time reading nothing but facts they already know and opinions they have already heard. Thus a well-chosen topic should be interesting both to you and to your readers.
>
> Tell students to choose a topic that can be researched. Topics to avoid are those based solely on personal experience, those which have only a single source of information, or those for which little specific information can be found. If they were to try to prove, for example, that chocolate ice cream tastes better than a thick, juicy steak, they probably would have problems because they would be expressing opinions which would be difficult to support. If, however, they were to discuss the nutritional value of these and other foods, they would be able to locate a large number of books and articles with usable details.
>
> (Adapted from Mills, Helen, Commanding Essays, 1977.)

Deciding on what topic to write should be a lengthy brainstorming part of the pre-writing process. Students should list, discuss, question each other, clarify and narrow their topics during this process. We have included here a list of topics brainstormed by one group illustrative only of the range of topics which can be considered.

Some topics to consider

| | |
|---|---|
| Planets | Death penalty |
| Public vs. Private schools | John F. Kennedy |
| Abortion | Ozone layer |
| Skiing | College life today |
| Clothes styles | Horses |

| | |
|---|---|
| Vacation sites in Wisconsin | Cancer |
| Junk Food | Obesity |
| Prison Facilities | Crime in big cities |
| Death | Overpopulation |
| Air Force | Teenage pregnancy |
| Collectors and Collectables | Remote control airplanes |
| Right to die | Running |
| ERA | Hot air balloons |
| Dietician | Olympics |
| Dreams | Astrology |
| Causes of death | Parenting |
| Future Space Program | Warfare and weapons |
| Babe Ruth | Diabetes |
| Nuclear Energy | Nashville |
| Walt Disney | The Depression |
| Charles Schultz | Earthquakes |
| Solar Power | Jury System |
| Drug usage | Censorship |
| Reincarnation | Conservation |
| Cults | Test tube babies |
| The Klan | Dog fighting |
| Consumerism | Computers |
| Careers | Downs syndrome |
| Electronic games | Mental Retardation |
| Space Shuttle | Survival in Antartica |
| Rubic's Cube | Aviation |
| Drinking | Divorce |

Obviously all of the topics and subjects listed above are too broad to be covered effectively in a research paper. Once the general topic area has been decided upon, the next task is to bring it into a narrower focus. Ask students to consider what point they want to make about the subject or what they hope to learn about it? As a preliminary step to the actual research of the narrow topic, some general, quick reading of their topics should be done. A good source for this type of skimming is the encyclopedia. Even though it may not be used directly in the research of the papers, the encyclopedia may be used to give some background information and ideas to begin research.

Developing note taking and bibliographic skills.

Earlier in this guide, we suggested some basic ways to get students to take notes. These skills need to be reemphasized at the middle/junior/senior

high school level. Students should be given clear directions for preparing bibliographic cards for both books and periodicals.

A bibliography card should be prepared for each source used. Notes should be written on seperate cards keyed to the bibliography card. Only one note or idea should be included on any card. Many young researchers write too many notes on one card and consequently find the cards less than useful in organizing the actual paper they intend to write. We recommend that students be requested to organize their notes in this way even if they are using only <u>two</u> sources.

Students must also learn the procedures for making bibliography entries on the cards and the procedures for organizing the bibliography for the paper. We have included as Exhibit D an example of a bibliography exercise developed by one school staff. This exercise is to be used following instruction on the specific bibliography style(s) agreed upon by the school staff.

Exhibit D

Bibliography Exercise

1. Put each part of the following in correct order with <u>perfect</u> punctuation.

2. Alphabetize all entries as they would appear in a completed bibliography. (Books, magazines, pamphlets, and newspaper articles have been underlined or put in quotation marks to help you identify the parts.)

A. Richard Wright
<u>Black Boy</u>
Harper and Row
1945
New York

B. William Strunk
E. B. White
<u>The Elements of Style</u>
Toronto, Canada
Macmillan
1959

C. Robert S. Gold, Editor
<u>Point of Departure</u>
New York
Dell
1967

D. Dover J. Wilson
"The Theater"
<u>Life in Shakespeare's England</u>
Middlesex, England
Penguin
1968
pp. 197-237

E. Garry Wills
"The Impeachment Man"
Atlantic Monthly
Vol. 233
May, 1974
pp. 79-84

F. "Open Secret"
Newsweek
Vol. XXI
Jan. 11, 1943
pp. 62-63

G. Anthony Baines
"Bagpipes"
Encyclopaedia Britannica
Vo..2
1968
pp. 1036-37

H. "Sarah Lawrence College"
Collier's Encyclopaedia
Vol. 20
1968
p. 427

I. "Making the Most of your Summer"
Chicago Tribune
June 15, 1977
p. 56

J. John Justin Smith
"Seeking the Trail of Man"
Chicago Daily News
April 13, 1979
Sec. 2
pp. 19-20

(Middleton High School, 1981)

Bibliography Exercises-Answer Sheet (English)

Baines, Anthony, "Bagpipes," Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1968 ed., vol. 2, pp. 1036-37.

Gold, Robert S., ed., Point of Departure, New York, Dell, 1967.

"Making the Most of Your Summer," Chicago Tribune, June 15, 1977, p. 56.

"Open Secret," Newsweek, vol. XXI, Jan. 11, 1943, pp. 62-63.

"Sarah Lawrence College," Collier's Encyclopaedia, 1968 ed., vol 20, p. 427.

Smith, John Justin, "Seeking the Trail of Man," Chicago Daily News, April 13, 1979, Sec. 2, pp. 19-20.

Strunk, William, and White, E. B., The Elements of Style, Toronto, Canada, Macmillan, 1959.

Wills, Garry, "The Impeachment Man," Atlantic Monthly, vol. 233, May, 1974, pp. 79-84.

Wilson, Dover J., "The Theater," Life In Shakespeare's England, Middlesex, England, Penguin, 1968, pp. 197-237.

Wright, Richard, Black Boy, New York, Harper and Row, 1945.

(Middleton High School, 1981)

Evaluation of Research Papers

Although direct response to the content and format of the research

paper is the most useful, teachers and students both have appreciated being able to refer to some guide which shows the relative value that the school staff is placing on the form and content of the research paper and the procedures usedin developing it. We have included two examples. Exhibit E shows the evaluation scheme used in an intermediate composition course to evaluate the final product. Exhibit F shows the evaluation scheme used in a social studies course to evaluate both the procedures and final product. There is nothing magical in the point system devised except that it does provide some clarity. This clarity can only be achieved if all school staff have had the opportunity to develop some consistency in evaluating through training in one evaluation scheme or another. (Many teachers have found it useful for themselves to have the total staff evaluate a small sample of papers and then to compare these ratings of student papers with the ratings given by colleagues.)

Exhibit E

Research Paper Evaluation: Intermediate Composition

Your paper will be evaluated on the basis of 100 points. The following is a list of the criteria for grading.

Record of Points

| Required Item | Possible Points | Points Earned |
|---|---|---|
| Form | | |
| Table of Contents/Outline | 10 | _____ |
| Footnotes | 10 | _____ |
| Bibliography | 10 | _____ |
| Spelling | 10 | _____ |
| Punctuation | 10 | _____ |
| Usage | 5 | _____ |
| Margins/General Appearance | 5 | _____ |

| Content | | |
|---|---|---|
| Introduction | 10 | _____ |
| Transitions | 10 | _____ |
| Conclusion | 10 | _____ |
| Thesis Statement | 5 | _____ |
| Reliability and Crediting Sources | 5 | _____ |
| Total | 100 | _____ |

Exhibit F

Research Paper Evaluation Form: Social Studies

Your research paper will be evaluated on the basis of 150 points: 50 points for preliminary study and 100 points for the final project. The following is a list of the criteria for grading. Keep this in mind as you proceed in your research.

Student Record of Points

| Required Item | Possible Points | Points Earned |
|---|---|---|
| 1. Topic and Thesis | 5 | _____ |
| 2. Rough Outline | 5 | _____ |
| 3. Rough Bibliography | 10 | _____ |
| 4. Final Outline | 15 | _____ |
| 5. Note Cards | 15 | _____ |
| 6. Final Project | | |
| Form and Structure | | |
| Table of Contents | 5 | _____ |
| Footnotes | 10 | _____ |
| Bibliography | 5 | _____ |
| Spelling/Grammar | 10 | _____ |
| General Appearance | 10 | _____ |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | **Content** | | |
| | Thesis | 10 | _____ |
| | Logical Flow of Paper | 10 | _____ |
| | Relevance of Content | 15 | _____ |
| | Credibility/Reliability of Sources | 10 | _____ |
| | Conclusion Based on Research Related to Thesis | 15 | _____ |
| TOTAL | | 150 | _____ |

# What Writing Skills Are Wisconsin Colleges Looking For?

Teaching our students to write unified, coherent, clear prose is important not only for the work they do in school but for the work they must do in college and in many jobs that they aspire to when they finish high school or college. We thought it might be useful here to include two statements about writing from the perspective of college faculty about the importance of writing skills and about the relationship of writing to academic success in college.

The University of Wisconsin-Madison's High School-University Curriculum Liaison Committee and the Office of New Student Services published in 1979 a resource manual called Preparation for College.[1] The manual includes many suggestions and examples about appropriate preparation for college. It includes information about all skill areas including reading, mathematics, and writing.

We have excerpted, with permission, two statements on writing that emphasize the research/writing skills that students need. The first statement describes writing skills in the humanities; the second statement lists the abilities needed by students in the social sciences and provides an example of the critical reading and research/writing skills required in an introductory psychology course. These examples should be of particular interest to your students who are intending to continue their schooling beyond Grade 12.

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[1]Copies are available from the Office of New Student Services, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 432 North Murray Street, Madison, Wisconsin, 53706.

## Writing Skills in the Humanities

As useful as training in mathematics is to academic success in the humanities, it pales in comparison to the absolute necessity for rigorous training in writing skills.

While the ability to write acceptable prose is important to all areas of study at the University, it is especially important in the humanities, for the very basic reason that the primary--virtually the exclusive--vehicle for communicating one's knowledge in the humanities is natural language. One can work out a formula in physics or an equation in mathematics without relying on prose. But one cannot criticize a piece of literature, explain the meaning of a work of art, explicate the origins of slavery, or assess a system of philosophy without resorting to prose. Nor can one master the intricacies of a foreign language unless one is familiar with the grammatical and syntactical workings of one's own language. Interestingly, well-developed writing skills are perhaps most important in those areas of the humanities where one might expect them to be least important: in the study of art (especially art history), music, film, and television: Why? Because students in these areas must be able to translate into clear verbal analysis perceptions and concepts that are essentially visual or aural in nature. This is difficult to do well, as years of research have shown, and often poses a formidable barrier to students.

Students in the humanities face essentially two types of writing tasks. The first is that of stating one's knowledge and ideas briefly, concisely, and economically, and is confronted in virtually all examinations. The second is that of developing and expressing one's thoughts in greater detail and at great length. This task is confronted whenever students write papers, research reports, or take-home examinations--in some elementary courses, in many intermediate courses, and in all advanced courses. It is not surprising, therefore, to find an almost direct correlation in the humanities between students' ability to write unified, coherent, clear prose and their academic success.

Handicaps in writing skills may be so serious as to prevent a student from completing a degree program; they inevitably contribute to lower grade-point averages and reduce a student's chances of getting into graduate school, as well as limit the choice of positions in private industry. . . .

Overall, study in the humanities seeks to develop critical thinking. It is, of course, necessary that students comprehend and accumulate information--to learn "facts"--that it is possible to obtain a degree without going much beyond this. But for students who aspire to excel, it is necessary to go beyond learning the "facts" and to develop the ability to think critically. This is so because the bulk of study in the humanities is devoted to the analysis of a creative work--whether a film, a poem, a painting, a political pamphlet, a symphony, a speech, a play, a novel, a scholarly book or essay. Too often students are unable to go beyond stating, "I like it," or "I don't like it ". But such statements are of little value unless students can explain why they like or dislike something by referring directly and precisely to the work

in question, by marshalling evidence to support their judgment, and by communicating that judgment clearly and precisely.

(Preparation for College, pp 14-15.)

## Social Studies

Nothing that concerns the far-ranging activities of human beings is outside the scope of social studies. The more than 30 schools and departments of the University of Wisconsin-Madison, considered a part of the division of the social studies, explore everything from the family relationship of South Sea islanders to the International Monetary Fund; from the management of a farmer's woodlot to teaching a roomful of restless five-year-olds. At first glance, philosophy may seem to have little in common with forestry, or political science with dance, or journalism with geography. All these disciplines, however, share a basic concern with the systematic study of human beings: the way we think and feel, the way we act and interact, the social institutions we create and what we do with these institutions. The focus here on systematic study is important whether the particular social studies course is in history, government, economics, civics, business, sociology, geography, anthropology, or any one of the many others listed in the Resource Manual; the tools one needs to study and learn within each discipline are specific yet interrelated. They are unique because they combine the skills a humanist uses to read, think, analyse, and communicate with the scientific skills used for proposing and perhaps testing possible new explanations or solutions to humanistic problems and/or life situations.

Thus, in exploring this enormous range of subjects, students and scholars in the social studies are unique in that they need to combine the scientist's accuracy and precision in observation with the equally important descriptive and communication skills employed intensively in the collection, the analysis, and the reporting of basic data.

Specifically, social studies at the university level require:

—the ability to think logically and analytically;
—the ability to use the basic tools of mathematics, including statistics;
—the ability to listen, and to record accurately what is heard;
—the ability to read with comprehension—and reasonably quickly;
—the ability to write correctly and clearly;
—the ability to communicate orally.

It is sometimes difficult to visualize in advance how much mathematical and communications skills one will need in order to handle college subjects. This is probably particularly true when students expect to concentrate on subjects that, on the surface, seem to have little to do with writing, or speaking, or manipulating numbers. After all, it is far from obvious that a freshman dance major will be expected to write a clear explanation of how to control neuromuscular hypertension, or that a would-be journalist must use algebraic formulas in planning an opinion survey.

Whichever discipline of the social studies students enter, they will quickly find that they must not only master the subject by

study but demonstrate mastery by carrying out investigations into some aspect of the subject area. Library skills are essential here as well as the previously mentioned social science skills. For example, an introductory psychology course requirement is a short paper demonstrating a critical reading of two or three articles on one topic. The following questions are provided the students as guidelines in reading the articles critically:

1. Authors both make claims and supply evidence. Do you agree that the inferences made by the authors are justified on the basis of the evidence they presented?
2. Is the evidence correlational in nature or can one justify seeing one of the variables as a "cause"?
3. Can the authors generalize from their sample to the population of interest?
4. Are there plausible alternative explanations for the data?
5. Notice how the authors operationalize the factors--does their experiment leave behind the original question?
6. Are there appropriate controls?
7. If there is contradictory evidence, see if you can figure out why such contradiction exists; as a first step, see if the two authors or sets of authors operationalize the same terms differently.

Once you finished your critical reading, you must write the paper. One way to do that is to determine what conclusions you feel are justified on the basis of all the papers together. Then you should state your conclusions and support them, referring at all times to specific points made in the articles. You must also note problems, contradictions, or qualifications that serve to limit your conclusions. Your paper should be very specific in both its claims and the evidence you provide; the paper should be closely tied to the readings that you use. If you do not use formal footnotes, you must refer to the study by author(s) and date. Please do not make statements without support; science writing is meant to inform.

If you think that the evidence in the papers is inconclusive, decide what evidence would convince you and design an experiment to obtain it. Then state the problem, support your inability to come to a conclusion, and state your experiment and why you think it would provide clear evidence for a position.

For this psychology course, a short paper is defined as 5 to 10 pages. Thus it is clear that in order for students to speak to the above questions adequately, they need the ability to write concisely. This skill is one mentioned over and over again by social studies faculty at UW-Madison.

(Preparation for College, pp 15-16.)

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Wisconsin Writing Project Participants

Summer 1982

Charlene Beckner
Deerfield Schools

Joan Cantwell
Oconomowoc Senior High School

Janet Danielson
Eastside School, Sun Prairie

Candice Duxheimer
Monroe Public Schools

Beth Dillie
Markesan Middle School

Jennifer Frickleton
Deerfield Elementary School

James Hain
Juda High School

Don Hinz
Rockwell Elementary School, Fort Atkinson

Loretta Hoversten
Deerfield Elementary School

Bruce Johnson
Oregon Jr. High School

Lori Jordan
Juda School

Elsa Lawrence
Middleton High School

Carol J. Levenson
UW-Madison

Alice Lewerenz
Oconomowoc Jr. High

Patricia Muehrer
James F. Luther Jr. High, Fort Atkinson

Mary Pat Muirhead
Jefferson Middle School, Madison

Heidi Mumm, Okauchee Elementary
Oconomowoc School District

Ann Niedermeier
West High School, Madison

Mary Pick
Juda School

Richard Reinke
Sun Prairie Sr. High School

Joe Ringeisen
Verona High School

Elizabeth Rohde
Loyal Oaks School, Sun Prairie

Margaret Rufi
Northside School, Monroe

Deborah Schilt
Monroe Public Schools

Bob Schultz
Sabish Jr. High, Fond du Lac

Rochelle Stillman
Northside Elementary, Middleton

Kathryn Strey
Luther Jr. High, Fort Atkinson

Barb Teff
Elm Lawn School, Middleton

Pam Jesian-Tobey
Waunakee High School

David Watry
Arrowhead High School, Hartland

Donna Welbes
Compere Elementary School, Madison

Mary Ziegelbauer
Arrowhead High School, Hartland

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Individuals desiring information concerning the Wisconsin Writing Project should write to:

Wisconsin Writing Project
1556 Teacher Education Building
University of Wisconsin
225 North Mills Street
Madison, Wisconsin 53706
(608)263-4660